

Simmons Responds

Speaks openly on CIA operations and principles

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MYSTIC—Congressman Rob Simmons has called in recent days for a return to traditional espionage techniques, following the resignation last week of CIA Director George Tenet.

"The question for America," Simmons said, "is: do you want your intelligence operatives to get the job done."

Simmons, speaking at a press conference from his Mystic headquarters last week, said that Tenet has been described as a "caretaker" as head of the Agency, when he should have been more of a "risk-taker."

"The best way to go after terrorists is with other people and that's the area where we're weakest," Simmons said, criticizing intelligence efforts. "Now is the time for new leadership and change and reform and redirecting at the CIA. America cannot continue to be a great power and cannot continue to protect its citizens if we don't have the eyes and the ears that the intelligence community provides to us."

Simmons pointed also to the policy of the CIA which grew out of the so-called "Torricelli principle." The Torricelli principle made it very difficult for CIA operatives to have business dealings with criminals or terrorists, referred to as "unsavory characters," during their undercover work in foreign nations.

Simmons argued that the Central Intelligence Agency is unable to properly do its job

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without access to people who are involved in terrorist and other criminal activities.

"If you're going to run an operation into drug dealers," he pointed out, "you're going to have to recruit drug dealers. And if you're going to run counter-terrorist operations into the Al Qaeda, you're going to have to recruit Al Qaeda."

"During World War Two, the OSS recruited and ran Nazis—Nazis! Now they're unsavory—they're Nazis! Pretty ugly, pretty unsavory."

"But if you want to penetrate the Nazi command and control structure, you've got to recruit Nazis. When you want to penetrate a terrorist group, who are you going to send in there, a Peace Corps volunteer?"

After September 11, Simmons said, Congress objected to the Torricelli principle because it interfered with the CIA's abilities to penetrate the organization of Al Qaeda.

George Tenet, struggling with fallout from the Sept. 11 tragedy

and criticism over intelligence mistakes in Iraq, announced yesterday that he soon plans to resign. Tenet, a Democratic appointee, is said to have overcome intelligence failures under his tenure because of his close relationship to President Bush.

Tenet announced that he was leaving for personal reasons, but members of Congress have reportedly speculated over whether he had been pushed out of office. Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner was also quoted as saying that he believed Tenet had been pushed out. Simmons said he doesn't "give much stock" to what Turner, a retired Navy admiral, has to say, but he did point to intelligence failures leading up to Sept. 11 and those concerning Iraqi weapons of mass destruction as reason to greet the change of command with open arms.

Simmons has suggested that

Tenet be replaced by Rep. Porter Goss (R-Fla.), chairman of the House Committee on Intelligence. When asked whether he had considered putting forward his own name for the job, Simmons replied that he is happy in his position in Congress.

"I love what I'm doing. I worked for the CIA for a decade; I spent over 30 years as a military intelligence officer but I enjoy being a member of Congress."

Simmons was optimistic that central intelligence issues would return to the forefront as America decides how to reform and reshape its spy agency. It will be up to America to decide, Simmons said, whether that means creating a better clandestine service or returning to more traditional spying tactics to penetrate terrorist organizations.

